

May 23

Matthew 14:13-21

“Leaven, Loaves, & Leftovers”

¹³ When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

¹⁴ And Jesus went forth, and

saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

¹⁵ And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. ¹⁶ But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. ¹⁷ And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

¹⁸ He said, Bring them hither to me. ¹⁹ And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. ²⁰ And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. ²¹ And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

Is there significance in the five thousand plus, and, four thousand plus, who were fed by Jesus from a tiny fraction of food? Does the number of leftovers mean something special?

What did Jesus want all who followed him to understand about the loaves and fish miracles and the leaven?

There were 5,000 fed, according to all four gospels.

5000	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Five Thousand are Fed	14: 13-21	6: 34-44	9: 10-17	6: 1-15

There were 4,000 fed, as in Matthew and Mark.

4000	Matthew	Mark
Four Thousand are Fed	15:32-39	8:1-9

The connection to leaven is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Leaven	Matthew	Mark	Luke
of: Pharisees, Sadducees, & Herod	16:5-12	8:14-21	12:1, 2

Matthew 14:13-21

5000

^{14:13} When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. ^{14:14} And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. ^{14:15} And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. ^{14:16} But Jesus said unto them, **They need not depart; give ye them to eat.**

Matthew 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but **five loaves**, and **two fishes**. ^{14:18} He said, **Bring them hither to me.** ^{14:19} And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the **five loaves**, and the **two fishes**, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and **brake**, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. ^{14:20} And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the **fragments** that **remained** **twelve baskets** full. ^{14:21} And they that had eaten were about **five thousand** men, beside women and children.

Mark 6

^{6:34} And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

^{6:35} And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: ^{6:36} Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

Mark ^{6:37} He answered And said unto them, **Give ye them to eat.** And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? ^{6:38} He saith unto them, **How many loaves have ye? go and see.** And when they knew, they say, **Five, and two fishes.** ^{6:39} And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. ^{6:40} And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

Mark 6:41 And when he had taken the **five loaves** and the **two fishes**, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and **brake** the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

6:42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

6:43 And they took up **twelve baskets full** of the **fragments**, and of the fishes.

6:44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about **five thousand** men.

Luke 9

9:10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

9:11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

9:12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

Luke 9:13 But he said unto them, **Give ye them to eat.** And they said, We have no more but **five loaves and two fishes**; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

9:14 For they were about **five thousand** men. And he said to his disciples, **Make them sit down by fifties in a company.** 9:15 And they did

so, and made them all sit down. 9:16 Then he took the **five loaves and the two fishes**, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and **brake**, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 9:17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of **fragments that remained** to them **twelve baskets.**

John 6

^{6:1}After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

^{6:2}And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. ^{6:3}And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

^{6:4}And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. ^{6:5}When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, **Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?**

^{6:6}And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

^{John 6:7}Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

^{6:8}One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

^{6:9}There is a lad here, which hath **five barley loaves**, and **two small fishes**: but what are they among so many? ^{6:10}And Jesus said,

Make the men sit down.

Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about **five thousand**.

John 6:11 And Jesus took
the loaves; and when he
had given thanks, he
distributed to the disciples,
and the disciples to them
that were set down; and
likewise of the fishes as
much as they would.

6:12 When they were filled,
he said unto his disciples,

**Gather up the
fragments**

**that remain,
that nothing be lost.**

6:13 Therefore they gathered
them together, and filled
twelve baskets

with the
fragments
of the five barley
loaves, which remained
over and above unto
them that had eaten.

Matthew 15:32-38

4000

15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 15:33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 15:34 And Jesus saith unto them, **How many loaves have ye?** And they said, **seven, and a few little fishes.**

Matthew 15:35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 15:36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and **brake** them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 15:37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up **of the broken meat that was left** **seven baskets** full. 15:38 And they that did eat were **four thousand** men, beside women and children.

Mark 8

8:1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

8:2 **I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:**

8:3 **And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.**

8:4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

8:5 And he asked them, **How many loaves have ye?** And they said, **Seven.**

Mark 8:6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the **seven loaves**, and gave thanks, and **brake**, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

8:7 And they had **a few small fishes**: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8:8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up **of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.** 8:9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

The Leaven Connection

Matthew 16

^{16:5} And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. ^{16:6} Then Jesus said unto them, **Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.** ^{16:7} And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. ^{16:8} Which when Jesus perceived, he Said unto them, **O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?**

Matthew 16:9 **Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?** ^{16:10} **Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?** ^{16:11} **How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?** ^{16:12} Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the **leaven** of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Mark 8:18 **Having eyes,
see ye not?
and having ears,
hear ye not?
and do ye not
remember?**

8:19 **When I brake the five
loaves among five
thousand, how many
baskets full of
fragments took ye up?**

**They say unto him,
Twelve.** 8:20 **And when**

**the seven among four
thousand, how many
baskets full of**

fragments took ye up?

And they said, Seven.

8:21 **And he**

**said unto them,
How is it that ye do
not understand?**

Luke 12

12:1 **In the mean time,
when there were
gathered together
an innumerable
multitude of people,
insomuch that they
trode one upon
another, he began
to say unto his
disciples first of all,**

**Beware ye of the
leaven of the
Pharisees,
which is
hypocrisy.**

12:2 **For there is
nothing covered,
that shall
not be revealed;
neither hid, that
shall not be known.**

Some have deemed the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 is important because of WHO was fed based on WHERE they were fed.

- 5 loaves, 2 fish > 5,000 fed > 12 containers remained.
- 7 loaves, a few fish > 4,000 fed > 7 containers remained.

The feeding of the **5,000** took place near Bethsaida, close to the Sea of Galilee.

Hence, some believe that only **Jews** were at that location and, therefore, only Jews were fed there. They say that the 12 remaining baskets represent the 12 **Jewish** disciples.

They proceed to connect the feeding of the **4,000**, which took place in the region of the Gerasenes, near Decapolis (where there were **Gentiles**). They take the 7 remaining

loaves to represent the number 7, which to many has come to mean perfection or completeness. Those who teach this theory say the Jews' 12 and the Gentiles' 7 (remaining baskets) shows that the Gentiles combined with the Jews exemplifies the Jew-Gentile connection in complete oneness.

While a pleasant and interesting supposition, it is

conjecture to surmise that *absolutely only* Jews were near Bethsaida and *absolutely only* Gentiles were near Decapolis. Further, to jump from that assumption to matching human-defined number meanings, could be most problematic. The so-called meanings of numbers is entirely inconsistent and depends solely on where you get the information. It changes and relies on who

you ask or what book or website you view. It is not at all definitive and it certainly is not Scripture.

Jesus took 5 loaves, with which he fed 5 thousand. Some have decided that this *may* connect to the 5 books of the Pentateuch (Genesis – Deuteronomy) but it's a loose fit—if one at all. Also, some have said that since 12 baskets of food remained,

this alludes to the 12 tribes of Israel, but again, where is the biblical proof of such connection?

Facts, mixed with speculation, could really throw people off track. It could be the very leaven of which Jesus was warning.

Many have determined that the number 7 absolutely and

always means completeness.

Assigning numbers
to ideologies, without express
biblical instruction is
extremely dangerous.

Frankly, it's could be a nasty
numerology practice that
could lead people far away
from the message itself. To
take guesswork and theory
as fact is undoubtedly not the
ideal way to teach, learn,
or study Scripture.

So, is there something super important concerning the feeding of the 5K and 7K with bread and fish? There is no way to come close to understanding without reading all of the related Bible verses.

The Jew-Gentile “oneness” explanations are not the point. At best, they are just guesses and stretches. They are in the danger zone of

being a technique to pull sincere seekers away from the real and powerful warning by Jesus himself. Within these very passages, we are warned to beware of leaven—the rising agent; the thing that starts off small or innocuous, then expands. Jesus was deeply concerned about the sneaky, little ways of thought, and the seemingly harmless behaviors, and the subtle influences of ungodly beliefs

and practices by tricksters.

In Matthew 16, verses 5-12, Jesus told his disciples they had “little faith”. He expressed frustration that his own disciples did not **understand** the connection between leaven of bread and false doctrine—“the **doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees**”. Mark 8:14-21 sends the same message but this time the

point is, “**the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod**”. Jesus stressed that his disciples did not seem to “perceive” or “**understand**” and questioned the condition of their spiritual hearts in saying, “have ye your heart yet hardened”? He was saying of his disciples, who had physical eyes and ears, that they could not see, hear, or remember spiritually. He

reminded them of the 12
leftovers and 7 leftovers then
asked again how it was that
they did not understand.

Luke 12 clarifies the
imperative matter where
Jesus tells his disciples to,
“Beware ye of the leaven of
the **Pharisees**, which is
hypocrisy”.

Any emphasis on Jews and

Gentiles concerning this topic
takes the focus away from
Jesus' plainly expressed
message.

Jesus crucially wanted his
followers, then and now, to
understand and remember
something. He showed he
could provide, but also
stressed that there is
something far more
important than our physical

and immediate need of food.

The disciples were sternly warned several times.

Jesus nearly scolded them about their lack of faith and understanding.

He plainly told the disciples that he was not talking about physical, or edible, bread.

Rather, he was trying to get them to understand the serious dangers of

SPIRITUAL leaven.

The disciples were told
to beware of the
“bread”, the “leaven”
or the doctrine of:

▶ **The Pharisees**

(being hypocrites –
Luke 12:1)

▶ **The Sadducees**

(being unbelieving –
Luke 20:27)

► Herod

(being deceived or
practicing deceit –
Mark 8:15)

The greater urgency, with regard to the loaves and fish, is in the warning about false doctrine, rather than the miracle of food, or who was fed where, or even attempts at making numbers match various ideologies.

Jesus used the feeding
of multitudes to segue
to a much deeper revelation
and pressed
his disciples to understand.

He urged: Sure, I can feed
people. I can provide so much
food that there will be
leftovers. However, there is
also an over abundance of
another kind of “food”.

Unlike MY sustenance, the
other kind of “bread” is very

dangerous. It's leaven. Rather than strengthen you, it will weaken you. Seriously be aware of and be cautious of that kind of "bread".

I'm trying to warn you.
You really need to get this.
Beware!"

Words including,
"fragments", "brake", and
gathered" in connection to

“leaven” may give insight into the meaning behind Jesus’ actions, words, emotions, and expectations. Those words are used over and over in relation to the food miracles and the warnings to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

It’s not that numbers do not have value. They often do, but to focus on them

without clear biblical direction does not lend itself to the best interpretation of Scripture. To try to connect the dots (so to speak) can be rather haphazard, because some dots are missing. Not everything is in print. We do not have every single thing that happened.

We are not told what significance there may be

in the previously mentioned numbers or in other numbers in the passages. We are not told, biblically, what connection there may be for the lack of specific numbers either. What of 5000, 4000, 1, 2, unnumbered fish, unnumbered women, unnumbered children, 50s, 100s, innumerable, multitude? How do those numbers or the generalized

count connect the Jews to the Gentiles to make completeness? We don't need to know that because that's not what's important.

Following the miraculous feedings of the multitudes, Jesus told his disciples (and he tells us now through Scripture) what is important. He urged to BEWARE of the leaven, the doctrine, of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and

of Herod. That's what we
are to understand.

That's where we should
study and go deeper to fully
comprehend what Jesus
meant concerning
the leaven, loaves, &
leftovers.